

Victorian Studies Association Newsletter



NUMBER 26, FALL 1980

Ontario, Canada

THE VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Number 26, Fall, 1980

Ontario, Canada

Edited for the Victorian Studies Association of Ontario

Editor: Bruce Kinzer, Department of History, McMaster
University, Hamilton, Ontario.

Please send submissions to the editor c/o
Mill Project, 27 Birge-Carnegie Library,
Victoria College, University of Toronto,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1K7

C O N T E N T S

Editorial	3
Forthcoming	3
News of Members	3
Communication	4
Report: 1980 VSA Conference	4
The Mysterious Death of the Rev. J. T. Stannard	5
Book Reviews	13
<u>Mrs. Trollope</u>	13
<u>The Arnoldian Principle of Flexibility</u>	15
<u>Reading the Victorian Novel</u>	18

EDITORIAL

The current editor of the VSA Newsletter would like to begin his tenure of office by thanking those who have made his job far less arduous than it might have been. My predecessor, Elizabeth Waterston, has ensured a smooth editorial transition, a process assisted by our former President, Jane Millgate. The reproduction and distribution of the Newsletter remain in the hands of Allan Austin (Department of English, Guelph), whose continued commitment in this area is much appreciated. I would also like to thank J. M. Robson, who has made it possible for the Newsletter to be edited out of the J. S. Mill Project, and Rea Wilmshurst, who is responsible for the typing.

The editor would be pleased to receive from members brief research-based notes and articles (not to exceed 2,500 words) for publication in the Newsletter.

FORTHCOMING

The 1981 Victorian Studies Association of Ontario Annual Conference will be held at Glendon College, Toronto, on Saturday, 11 April. Guest speakers will be J. F. C. Harrison (University of Sussex) and Robertson Davies (Massey College, University of Toronto).

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Kristin Brady (Illinois) presented a paper entitled "From the Ancestral Footstep to the Elixir of Life: British and American Themes in Hawthorne's Last Romances," to the Concord Conference of the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society, 3 October 1980.

Juliet McMaster (Alberta) has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. At the George Eliot Centennial Conference at the University of Puget Sound in April she gave a paper entitled "'Beauty Bespeaks Itself Flesh': The Physical Lives of George Eliot's Characters." Soon to be published by Macmillan of London is a collection of her essays and R. D. McMaster's, The Novel from Sterne to James: Essays on the Relation of Literature to Life.

Michael Millgate (Toronto) has completed a biography of Hardy for publication by the Oxford University Press and Random House. The second volume of The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, edited by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, was published by the Clarendon Press in October 1980.

David Shaw (Toronto) during the past year has published essays on topics in Victorian poetic theory in Criticism, Victorian Studies, and English Literary History. He also gave public lectures at Northwestern University and at a conference on Victorian medievalism at the City College of New York. His subjects were "Victorian Generic Theory: Some Compass Points and Problems," and "Browning and Pre-Raphaelite Medievalism: Educated versus Innocent Seeing."

Elizabeth Waterston (Guelph) is on sabbatical leave, with an SSHRCC senior leave fellowship awarded for a study of biography in Canada during the nineteenth century. She will spend part of her leave at the University of Edinburgh.

COMMUNICATION

Please note that the Carlyle Newsletter has a new address for North American subscribers: c/o Dr. A. Skabarnicki, Department of English and Philosophy, Royal Military College, Kingston, Ontario K7L 2W3. Subscriptions are \$5.00 for issues 1 (1979) through 3 (1981).

REPORT

1980 VSA CONFERENCE

More than ninety people attended the thirteenth annual meeting of the Victorian Studies Association of Ontario at Glendon College, Toronto, on 12 April 1980. Most of these were faculty members and graduate students from universities in Ontario, but some came from Quebec, New York State, and even further afield. The speaker during the morning session was Professor F. S. L. Lyons, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, Irish historian and biographer, currently working on the authorised biography of W. B. Yeats. In his paper, "Yeats and Victorian Ireland," he evoked in broad terms the political and cultural situation in Ireland at the time when Yeats began to write and then dealt in greater detail with Yeats as "an operator," with his relationship to particular political and cultural groups, and with the various methods (many of them involving public controversy) by which he sought to propagate his ideas. Following a lively discussion the conference adjourned for lunch, itself enlivened by a Victorian "entertainment" devised and presented by Dr. Tony Stephenson.

The afternoon session consisted of a lecture on "William Morris's 'Huge Mass of Reading,'" given by Professor William Whitla of York University, Toronto. Professor Whitla spoke of the way in which it was possible to discover from a variety of sources what books Morris read as a child and young man (including those studied for his Oxford examinations) and what

was in his library at the time of his death. He suggested that these books could most usefully be divided into the two categories of literature and "tools," the latter including dictionaries, philological works, technical manuals, and other volumes drawn upon by Morris in his multiple roles as artist, printer, translator, author, and socialist thinker. Of particular importance, as Professor Whitla pointed out, was Morris's fine collection of illuminated manuscripts.

The conference closed with the annual business meeting of the Association, conducted by the retiring President, Jane Millgate. The meeting elected Michael Laine, of Victoria College, University of Toronto, to be President for the next two years. Judith Grant remains as Secretary-Treasurer.

THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF THE REV. J. T. STANNARD

Mark Johnson
University of Toronto

"Our God was loving you
And leading you to die--
His Fatherhood about you
On the Autumn sea. . . ."

While walking to work at half past five on the morning of 12 September 1889, William Dagger, a gas stoker, found a corpse in the sand beyond the South Pier at Blackpool. The body was badly marred with cuts and bruises, and it was evident that the deceased, a middle-aged man, had been battered against the iron pillars of the pier by the sea, which had been very rough the previous night. Dagger hailed a boatman passing at a distance to wait by the body while he went for a policeman. He returned shortly after with Officer Pettybridge who carefully examined the body, noting that the pockets had not been turned inside out, and from the scraps of paper he found Pettybridge determined that the deceased had been residing at the South Shore Hydropathic Establishment in Blackpool. While the body was taken to the Police Station, "Inquiries were made at this place, and two of the menservants viewed the body and recognised it as that of a gentleman who had been staying at the Hydro. since the 3rd. of September, and who had given the name of the Rev. J. T. Stannard, Congregational minister, of Huddersfield."¹

These were some of the facts reported by the Blackpool and Fleetwood Gazette in a surprisingly detailed account of the investigation which occurred following the mysterious death in Blackpool of the Rev. John Turner Stannard. The provincial newspaper press, which expanded rapidly after Gladstone's repeal of the "Tax on Knowledge" in 1861, is often a rich source of detailed information for the historian, and it is the purpose of this article to provide one example of how valuable the local press may be in doing historical detective work. The provincial press was concerned primarily with events of local interest, and as such it was

frequently more exhaustive in its reporting of incidents which the larger, nationally based dailies, committed to high politics and international events, could not hope to cover. Moreover, although many of them were regulated by editorial policy, the provincial papers were often more reliable than the vast number of more specialized papers, like those comprising the "Religious Press," which possessed specific polemical objectives.

Stannard's death is a case in point, for the detailed discussion of it found in the local Blackpool papers offers a revealing corrective to the account published in that London based organ of official Nonconformist opinion, the Nonconformist and Independent. This religiously oriented newspaper, which represented Nonconformity in the world of religious journalism, was founded initially in 1841 as the Nonconformist, and its first and finest editor had been Edward Miall, the pre-eminent spokesman of a politically aggressive and socially defiant middle-class religious Dissent. Its caption was "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant Religion," and by the 1880s the Nonconformist and Independent had become the predominant voice of a socially aspiring Nonconformist religious community, which would tolerate no longer the social discrimination and political exclusion it had suffered for refusing to conform to the established Church of England.²

Concerning Stannard's death the Nonconformist and Independent announced in a brief notice that:

The evidence is distinctly against the theory of suicide. . . . One view which may be taken of the death is that Mr. Stannard fainted and was overtaken by the tide; but another, and perhaps more probable, is that he was robbed, and stunned or overcome by excitement and fainted; and that his heart stopped beating either by fatigue or through the robbery.³

That Stannard's gold watch was missing, that only 4½ d. were found in his pockets, and that according to his wife Stannard was subject occasionally to fainting spells, were facts evinced in favour of a theory of foul play. However, there was little serious discussion in the Nonconformist and Independent of the very real possibility that the violent action of the water that threw Stannard against the pier could have detached his watch and emptied some of the contents of his pockets. Nor was there any mention of the fact that Stannard's pockets were not turned out, and that his cheque-book was found on his person: details reported in full by the Blackpool and Fleetwood Gazette. And yet for reasons which will become clear, this theory of foul play became orthodox doctrine within Congregationalism--a denomination that plumed itself on its recently acquired middle-classness, was politically aggressive, and highly sensitive about the charge of social inferiority. This was the theory held by Stannard's progressive congregation at Milton Church in Huddersfield,⁴ officially ratified for the other Nonconformist churches by the Nonconformist and Independent, and recorded for posterity in the only biographical sketch we have of Stannard, written by his closest friend, the Rev. John Hunter: "Next morning he was found dead on the beach, having been robbed of watch and purse. . . ."⁵ But if the events of Stannard's life, gathered from a variety of sources, are compared with the facts of his death reported by

the local Blackpool press, another theory emerges of what must remain a mystery.

Who was this Rev. J. T. Stannard? What had brought him to the South Shore Hydropathic Establishment in Blackpool?

John Turner Stannard was born at Chelmsford in 1844, the son of Anglican parents. We know little about his youth except that at the age of twenty he gave up the idea of becoming a lawyer, abandoned the Anglican Church, and opted for Nonconformity with the intention of becoming a foreign missionary.⁶ The reasons for these changes in his life are not apparent, although it is conceivable that Stannard experienced intellectual difficulty as a young Anglican in the 1860s and sought religious assurance in the Congregational world, which by mid-century was still moderately Calvinist. In 1867 Stannard entered the Congregational Institute at Nottingham, established to provide a short course of practical training for the Congregational ministry, and there he met John Hunter, who became his idol, and his room-mate. Hunter was an exceptionally gifted young Nonconformist destined for sparkling success as one of Congregationalism's most popular pulpit luminaries, and it appears that the extremely close relationship which developed between the two was conceived in the radical difference of their personalities. Each possessed qualities the other did not. Hunter was bright, brash, impatient, and powerful in the pulpit, while the following words were used to describe Stannard: "sensitive beyond most," "affectionate," "beautiful," "simple," "loveable," "tender," "sweetness," "gentleness and tenderness of womanhood."⁷ At Spring Hill College in Birmingham, which the two inseparable companions entered in 1868 to continue their ministerial training, the students referred to Hunter as "the Preacher," while Stannard was known as "Major Charlie Square Toes."⁸

The nickname was apt, for the portrait of Stannard which emerges from the record of his Spring Hill College days is that of an awkward, effeminate, frustrated, painfully sensitive, intellectually limited young man. He had trouble with the College curriculum. While Hunter breezed through his course, leaving in 1872 for Salem Chapel in York, Stannard lagged behind to struggle with the theology courses for almost six years. He was fastidious. "He was always at work." "His preaching was a 'labour of love', but still a labour, which sometimes taxed his strength, and exhausted his nervous and mental capacity." Hunter recorded that Stannard finally completed his College course successfully "on the whole," but the verdict of his fellow students, including Hunter, was unanimous: "No one claimed for him exceptional mental gifts." "Mr. Stannard was not, strictly speaking, a scholar," ". . . neither a scholar or [sic] a thinker. . . ." "Mr. Stannard's college career was marked by much quiet earnestness."⁹

It was also marked by doubt. Doing poorly in theology, Stannard developed an interest in contemporary literature and the study of nature. "He was an indefatigable student in many directions. . . . [H]e knew something about every book of importance that was published." "He was more responsive to the loveliness and grandeur of nature than any one I have ever known. The sea had a great charm for him. . . ." But these interests exposed Stannard to more complex religious problems than he had known before, and the result was theological confusion. He was "moved and shaken

to the very centre by the intellectual disturbance of our age of revolt and reconstruction,"¹⁰ but unlike Hunter he lacked the capacity to formulate an integrated theological response to these difficulties. While at Spring Hill Hunter had turned in doubt to Frederick Denison Maurice, as many young Nonconformists did at this time, and "Stannard also professed to sit at the feet of Maurice, but he was a rather desultory student. I think he read George MacDonald more than Maurice--so getting his Maurice-ianism in diluted form."¹¹ His simplistic theological resolution was "that God's commandment was exceeding broad." Dr. David Worthington Simon, Stannard's theological professor at Spring Hill College, assessed his student in the following terms:

His intellectual processes were rather difficult to follow: or, at any rate, their outcome not infrequently lacked clearness of definition. He thought earnestly, and aimed at thoroughly grappling with problems; but both whilst he was at Spring Hill and afterwards, he suggested to me the words, "Moving about in worlds unrealized." He had a fine goal before him, namely, the unification of the old and new; but a certain haze of the sort that is now very popular, and which was not without a charm of its own, hung around his treatment of the subjects he took in hand. . . . He overflowed with Christian courtesy and kindness. Possibly the former a wee bit too elaborate. . . .

All were agreed, however, that though Stannard could be "at times provokingly unselfish" and was suspected "at times of pusillanimity," there was in him the capacity to be firm, if not rigid; for "when it was a question of principle he stood his ground, and held it with a firmness and tenacity which nothing could shake, and all the more so because of that gentleness which was so marked a feature in his character."¹² It was this unusual combination of personal attributes which contributed in large part to the "scandal and shame"¹³ that transpired.

Stannard abandoned the vision of foreign fields in 1874 to go to Ramsden Street Congregational Chapel in Huddersfield, and there he became the cause of the "classic,"¹⁴ and for certain the most bitter chapel disruption experienced by the Congregational community during the last half of the nineteenth century. Huddersfield was a stronghold of northern, masculine, industrial Nonconformity, and at the centre of Huddersfield Congregationalism was Ramsden Street, founded in 1825.

Typical of its membership was the Willans family. William Willans, who died in 1863, had been a founding member and deacon of Ramsden Street; had through diligent labour under the rule of a moderate Calvinism become a prosperous wool magnate by mid-century; had devoted much of his time and energy in public service, running for Parliament in 1852. His brother-in-law, Charles Henry Jones, was the first mayor of Huddersfield as well as deacon at Ramsden Street. Of Willans' four sons, none of whom was comfortable with Calvinism, one was elevated to Nonconformist royalty by marrying into the Baines family, and worked for the Leeds Mercury; one was a prosperous London wool-broker and Liberal politician; one was a Mayor of Rochdale; and the last and youngest, James Willans, remained in Huddersfield to continue the family's tradition of public service as, among other things, President of the Chamber of Commerce. One of the

grandsons was young Henry Herbert Asquith.¹⁵

Into this conclave of virile Nonconformity entered Stannard, with his "gentleness and tenderness of womanhood." He was to be Assistant to the retiring minister, Richard Skinner, who had preached Calvinism, stressing a consummate "Sovereignty of God." Stannard, however, proclaimed the "Fatherhood of God," a special theme of John Hunter's which was becoming the vogue among a younger generation of Nonconformist ministers. They preferred a loving and loveable incarnated God to a severe Jehovah with a thirst for atoning blood. But not only did Stannard plump for the "Fatherhood"; he went on to assert "the other half which belongs to and completes it, i.e., the Motherhood of God"! He "sneered at Calvinism" from the pulpit and took to using the delicate expression "infamous and blasphemous doctrine of Calvinism."¹⁶

When Richard Skinner finally retired in 1877 and Stannard announced his intention of becoming the full pastor in Skinner's place, the congregation divided into two opposing camps and Ramsden Street became a place of battle. The older generation, which comprised a majority of the deacons and the chapel trustees, evoked the long forgotten Trust Deed: a legal document saturated with Calvinism that had been drafted in 1846 by those who had initially purchased the chapel property to ensure that the full pastorate would be occupied by a Calvinist only. The leader of this anti-Stannard camp was William Willans' brother-in-law, Charles Henry Jones, aged seventy-four. But the younger generation, who comprised a slight majority of the church members and who considered the theology of their fathers to be old-fashioned, found Stannard's trendy progressivism sweet music to their ears and they canvassed for his appointment. The leader of this pro-Stannard faction was William Willans' youngest son, James Willans, aged thirty-two. Meanwhile, Stannard came to the conclusion that the issue at stake was really a matter of principle--that "perfect liberty of conscience" which was to be reserved for every minister of the denomination, and consequently he pursued his candidacy with all that "firmness and tenacity" of which he was capable, disregarding the fact that to do so was deliberately to foster "dissension in Israel."

The Christians at Ramsden Street fought this fight for four years. The pro-Stannard camp attempted over this period of time to secure the two-thirds majority required to elect Stannard despite the wishes of the deacons and trustees with their "piece of paper," while the deacons and trustees countered by threatening legal action using the Trust Deed if that vote were taken. Finally, in 1880, the pro-Stannard faction struck forty-five members from the Church Roll on the grounds that they had been lax in their attendance (all of the forty-five just happened to be opposed to Stannard), and Stannard was duly elected full pastor by the required two-thirds majority. The deacons and trustees promptly appealed to the High Court of Chancery in London with their Trust Deed, and the sordid details of what had happened at Ramsden Street became entertainment at the breakfast tables of the nation.¹⁷

The trial concerning the right of the Rev. J. T. Stannard to hold the full pastorate of Ramsden Street Congregational Chapel exercised the High Court of Chancery under Vice-Chancellor Sir Charles Hall for seven full days in January 1881. It was reported widely in the national press

and became a severe embarrassment for the Congregational churches. For here were ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ giving evidence against one another, making accusations against one another, and imputing all manner of duplicity. Here were private letters being read out in Court, including one written by Professor David Worthington Simon of Spring Hill College stating that Stannard's "flabby, goody, useless theology is my abomination."¹⁸ Here were Congregationalists who professed to be no longer provincial puritans but cultured and progressive "Free Churchmen," haggling over the finer points of predestination and speaking of "gross heresy" as though they had never left the seventeenth century. And here was the Rev. J. T. Stannard, such a fine representative of Congregationalism's younger ministry, referred to as one of those "miserable men who, from intellectual imbecility, can neither accept the conclusions of other men, nor rest with assurance on their own."¹⁹

Nor was this all. To overcome the obstacle of the Trust Deed, Stannard and his fellow defendants "hoped that he [Vice-Chancellor Hall] would follow the policy of Church courts generally, would consider the general drift of opinion amongst Congregationalists, would take evidence of theological experts, and would then pronounce whether Mr. Stannard had gone beyond the limits of reasonable liberty."²⁰ Here was the denomination which embodied the very dissidence of Dissent inviting "the judges of the land to construe their articles or say what were their true doctrines," as The Times observed. The Anglican Church Times gloated in its conclusion that "what the Ecclesiastical Commissioners do for us, the Charity Commissioners do for Nonconformists; and . . . if the Privy Council undertakes to define our standards, the Court of Chancery and House of Lords do the same for the sects."²¹ If this were the case, was not the claim that the Nonconformists possessed greater liberty than the established Church in their independence of the State nothing more than a hollow sham? Could the Liberation Society any longer point its finger so self-righteously at the Church? This argument brought R. W. Dale, grandest of Nonconformist statesmen, and James Guinness Rogers, pugilist for the Liberation Society, rushing into print to show that "it was a point of civil right alone which had to be settled"²² and not theology; that the issue was one of property instead of predestination. Thus Dale and Rogers found themselves in an extremely awkward position, for they both opposed rigid Trust Deeds as contrary to the spirit of Congregationalism, but to defend the independence of Congregationalism and the legitimacy of the Liberation Society, they were forced to disavow Stannard's defence, to ask Vice-Chancellor Hall to accept the plaintiff's case, and kick Stannard out of the Ramsden Street pulpit. And this is precisely what Vice-Chancellor Hall proceeded to do.

Poor Stannard! Impugned in court and abandoned by all but his loyal Huddersfield following who themselves had used him to spite their fathers, his only recourse was to seek solace in a questionable martyrdom. He closed his last sermon at Ramsden Street with the magnanimous benediction: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," and left to establish Milton Church (not Chapel) in Huddersfield, "with chancel, transepts, central isle and side pulpit. The arcades were stone, not iron and wood, and the chancel wall hung with tapestry curtains given by James Willans."²³ Milton was Stannard's second and last chance to become the

successful minister he had always wanted, and at least had the ambition, to become; a minister like John Hunter, instead of an egregious embarrassment to his brethren. But in this too he failed.

In the first place, he never recovered from "the terrible trial" which had paraded his shortcomings before the general public. It "told severely upon Mr. Stannard, and left ill effects, from which he never quite recovered." In the second place, "his constant striving to do his very best for his congregation, in the pulpit and out of it, was too much for him." He slaved continuously over his sermons and spared no energy in his final effort to become a model minister. Consequently, in 1883 his health "gave way so seriously that his medical advisors ordered him abroad"; an "enforced retirement" in Switzerland, as Stannard called it, which was for him a serious "trial of faith."²⁴ For it appears that at this time Stannard's nagging doubts returned to him in full force, and that his "flabby, goody, useless theology" provided little consolation in this last crisis. The few details we have of him from his return to Huddersfield until his death indicate that Stannard became deeply disturbed. He sought peace of mind by walking, endlessly, and often at night. The Rev. W. T. Moreton, a Congregational minister near Huddersfield, reported that "Sometimes he came to my house on Friday or Saturday night, having walked the eight or ten miles from Huddersfield, or intending to walk back, so unstrung in mind as to be unfit to prepare new sermons for his own people, and asking me to exchange pulpits for the Sunday."²⁵ Finally, in 1889, Stannard made one last attempt at success. He undertook to preach extempore: a feat at which John Hunter excelled, and which was regarded in the Nonconformist world as a sign of pulpit superiority. But his attempts were an awkward and dismal failure, and he became deeply depressed.²⁶ At the Sunday morning service of 1 September 1889, "before leaving the pulpit he apologised to the congregation for his inability to do justice to his subject." At the evening service "he broke down . . . and was in such a state of nervous prostration when he entered the vestry as to be unable to take the communion service as usual afterwards. On the 3rd. he went to Blackpool, hoping that a change of air and rest would restore him. . . ."²⁷ And at nine o'clock on the evening of the eleventh, he told his fellow guests at the South Shore Hydropathic Establishment that he was going out for one of his walks.

The proclamation of the Nonconformist and Independent that the "evidence is distinctly against the theory of suicide" is revealing in its complete denial. In life Stannard had been an embarrassment to his Congregational brethren, and his trial had given "fair occasion . . . for the enemy to blaspheme," as the Rev. James Baldwin Brown put it.²⁸ Acutely sensitive to external criticism and nervous about their public image, Congregationalists were anxious that in his death Stannard should not bring more "scandal and shame" upon them. Consequently, the official voice of Nonconformist opinion, the Nonconformist and Independent, sought to establish that Stannard had been the victim of foul play. In doing so it was selective in its reporting of the evidence presented at the Coroner's Inquest: evidence considered in detail by the local Blackpool press, less subject to the pressures of religious politics, and concerned primarily with reporting in detail a local event of interest to its readership. For instance, the Blackpool and Fleetwood Gazette reported

the expert testimony hardly mentioned in the Nonconformist and Independent of Dr. Heslop who had examined the body: "In his opinion the wounds on the head were caused after death. The appearance of the brain was consistent with death from drowning. The wounds were such as might have been caused by the head coming in contact with the pier or sea wall."

The jury returned the verdict "Found Drowned," a decision which, given the evidence, was highly favourable to Stannard's family and congregation, although John Hunter expressed indignation that there was no reference in the verdict to robbery. Among all the glowing tributes delivered at the funeral, there was one defensive allusion to the actual circumstances of Stannard's death: "With the mystery surrounding the last moment of the dear brother whose face we shall see no more," announced the Rev. A. Phillips, "we have little to do. It is with God." And as the funeral procession, "headed by about one hundred Nonconformist ministers," made its way down the North Road of the town toward the cemetery, "the bell of the Huddersfield Parish Church was tolled."²⁹

NOTES

¹Blackpool and Fleetwood Gazette, 13 September 1889, p. 5; 20 September 1889, p. 6.

²The Nonconformist merged with the English Independent to form the Nonconformist and Independent in 1880. The English Independent had been Josiah Conder's Patriot until 1866. Miall edited the Nonconformist from 1841 until his death in 1881. See William H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation (London: Epworth Press, 1972), pp. 11-18; Clyde Binfield, So Down to Prayers (London: Dent, 1977), ch. 5, pp. 101-24; A. Miall, The Life of Edward Miall (London: Macmillan, 1884). The Nonconformist and its successor were primarily Congregational papers. This is indicative of the fact that Nonconformity's political leadership was predominantly Congregational.

³Nonconformist and Independent, 19 September 1889, p. 907.

⁴Ibid., p. 908.

⁵John Hunter, "Biographical Sketch," in John Turner Stannard's The Divine Humanity and Other Sermons (Glasgow: James Maclehouse, 1892), p. xxx.

⁶Ibid., pp. ix-xii.

⁷These and many similar adjectives are found in the numerous "Memorials" included in Stannard's The Divine Humanity.

⁸Leslie Stannard Hunter, John Hunter, D.D. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921), pp. 19, 33.

⁹Stannard, Divine Humanity, pp. 198, 179, xiii, xxxiii, 189, xiv.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. xxxiii-xxxiv, 184.

¹¹F. J. Powicke, "Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872): A Personal Reminiscence," Congregational Quarterly (1931), pp. 168-81.

¹²Stannard, Divine Humanity, pp. xv, 186, 188, 187, 195.

¹³Nonconformist and Independent, 10 February 1881, p. 121.

¹⁴A. W. Sykes, Ramsden Street Independent Chapel, Huddersfield. Notes and Records (Huddersfield, 1925), p. 201. According to Sykes, Stannard was not their first choice. I am indebted to Dr. Clyde Binfield for making a copy of this work available to me.

- ¹⁵Ibid., pp. 95-6, 99-100; Binfield, So Down to Prayers, pp. 157-8.
- ¹⁶Stannard, Divine Humanity, p. 2; Nonconformist and Independent, 27 January 1881, pp. 84-5.
- ¹⁷The details of the controversy at Ramsden Street may be gleaned from the account of the trial reported in the various issues of the Nonconformist and Independent in January and February 1881.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 3 February 1881, p. 109.
- ¹⁹Ibid., 10 February 1881, p. 121.
- ²⁰James Guinness Rogers, "The Huddersfield Chapel Case," Congregationalist (1881), p. 190.
- ²¹The Times, 2 February 1881, p. 9; Church Times, quoted in the Nonconformist and Independent, 10 February 1881, p. 127.
- ²²Rogers, "Huddersfield Chapel Case," p. 188.
- ²³Binfield, So Down to Prayers, p. 160.
- ²⁴Stannard, Divine Humanity, pp. xxii, xxvi-xxvii.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 180.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. xxviii.
- ²⁷Ibid.; Huddersfield Chronicle, 14 September 1889, p. 5.
- ²⁸Nonconformist and Independent, 10 February 1881, p. 121.
- ²⁹Stannard, Divine Humanity, pp. 198-9.

BOOK REVIEWS

Mrs. Trollope: The Triumphant Feminine in the Nineteenth Century.
By Helen Heineman. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979. Pp. xii + 316.

There can be little doubt that it is time for a thorough and scholarly biography of Fanny Trollope. It is true that other biographers have tried their hands, chiefly her daughter-in-law who published a two-volume memoir in 1895, twenty-two years after Fanny's death, and, more recently, Eileen Bigland in 1954 and Johanna Johnston in 1978. Also notable is the Stebbins's The Trollopes: The Chronicle of a Writing Family (1946), which deals with the entire clan, and Donald Smalley's introduction to the 1949 edition of Domestic Manners of the Americans. Helen Heineman's work is set off from Fanny Trollope's other recent biographers in that she has rediscovered correspondence unavailable to them and not fully used in Frances Eleanor's 1895 memoir. This correspondence consists of some thirty letters from Fanny Trollope to Julia Garnett Perez, a life-long friend. Heineman has made full use of these along with other letters from the Garnett-Perez Collection and letters from Frances and Camilla Wright to Julia Perez. The collection is currently in the Houghton Library and is, unfortunately, not available to other scholars. Access to this body of material has allowed Heineman to amplify considerably and to modify the received account of Mrs. Trollope's life as well as to provide a fuller and more interesting interpretation of her work.

Professor Heineman's sub-title, The Triumphant Feminine in the Nineteenth Century, to some extent points to her thesis; indeed, the biography presents a feminist argument. In this connection it is worth mentioning, with something like warm approval, that recent research, which has been

directed towards feminism and Women's Studies, has saved for preservation and study much material of interest both to historians and to students of literature. Heineman tells us that her own book comes as a result of her discovery, some ten years ago, of the letters to Julia Garnett Perez.

Professor Heineman's central argument stems from what might be described as the thesis of Mrs. Trollope's Domestic Manners of the Americans; she tells us that, in concentrating on "domestic manners," Fanny Trollope discovered that the status of women in a society is the key to that society's values and institutions. This perception Mrs. Trollope carried through to her fiction. Later Professor Heineman quotes from Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw, "Slavery is terrible for men, but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own." Later novels explore the possibility of a vigorous and intelligent woman overcoming the disadvantages that her society causes her to suffer and, with a little help from the plot, successfully managing her conflict with men. In this way she shows that Fanny Trollope's life and her work come together, giving force to the idea of the "triumphant feminine."

Beyond this, Fanny Trollope is a fascinating figure. It is possible that life with her father, a parson, who always seemed more interested in mechanics and his inventions than in his parish, somewhat stiffened her character. Her mother died when she was about five and her father remarried some sixteen years later. Five years after that, she and her sister went to live with her younger brother in London. She seems to have been an outgoing, vivacious young woman, her spirit a combination of joy and strength. She was married at the age of thirty to a London barrister who, although his courtship correspondence demonstrates a playful if somewhat dry humour, became progressively more gloomy and introverted as his life went on. She did not begin to publish until she was fifty-two; between that time and her death at eighty-four (the birth date on her gravestone appears to be in error by a year) she produced some forty books. Forced for a time to live in Bruges for reasons of economy, she did her daily stint at writing while nursing a dying son in one bed and a husband dying in another. Her energy and fortitude cannot be questioned. It does, however, seem remarkable that she was able to damp down her life and spirits to become a more or less conventional nineteenth-century wife until necessity forced fame. The trip to America and the production of Domestic Manners is too well known to rehearse here. Heineman gives a clear account of the American journey in 1827-31 and the reasons for it. More travel books and the novels followed.

Professor Heineman does more than simply present Mrs. Trollope's career in terms of the strength and accomplishments of a determined and somewhat self-willed woman who was able to overcome the difficulties placed in her way by prejudices against her sex. She succeeds in describing and accurately placing the artistic accomplishment of her subject. Not only can she see Fanny Trollope's career as an inevitable progression in the advocacy of a cause, but she shows that her experience, her character, and her love of life provided what might be described as a fictional drift to all her work, novels and travel books alike. Speaking of the travel books Heineman says, "But Mrs. Trollope, with her novelist's instinct, made people prominent in a genre where landscape, place, and

exposition usually dominated. . . . Mrs. Trollope did not merely record speech. Her American book had taught her how to shape her dramatic stories to reveal general truths about a society. . . . she always made even the smallest facts suggestive of a larger whole. Her books were popular because they were a new type of fiction." It may be that too high a claim has been made for originality here; Professor Heineman might be too fond of finding "firsts": "the first novel in England or America to call attention to the evils of slavery in the United States" (The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw [1836]), a new kind of heroine in The Widow Barnaby (1839), an "innovative first novel of the industrial poor in England" (Michael Armstrong [1839]), "For awhile, Hargrave [1843] moves like an exciting mystery story, briefly anticipating another as yet undeveloped genre," and so on. It is one thing to claim a kind of popular innovation and another to suggest that subsequent works were derivative. Caleb Williams does precede Hargrave, and, although "The similarities between the widow Barnaby and Becky [Sharp] are striking," the widow is not the first female picaro, and Becky is another sort of thing altogether. Still the facts are there, and, I suppose, one is entitled to make of them what one can, and to cavil here is to diminish the value of a lively talent and to diminish Heineman's accomplishment in interpreting it.

After 1856, Fanny Trollope's powers declined. She stopped writing, and the last years were muted by failing memory and an attraction to spiritualism. Professor Heineman cannot and will not claim that all the work is equally good, and we know that Fanny Trollope will never be counted a major Victorian artist. Nevertheless, when she was good she was very good indeed. We can, now more than ever, respond to the force of her ideas and to the vigour of her spirit. Professor Heineman's book is written in a clear and lively style; the account it gives is usefully and carefully documented. She has used her new sources with discrimination, and has set the record straight. One might only complain that in such a very good book the publishers could have exercised more care in reproducing the well-chosen illustrations.

Michael Laine
Victoria College
University of Toronto

The Arnoldian Principle of Flexibility. By William Robbins. No. 15, English Literary Studies Monograph Series. Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria, 1979.

It is no dispraise whatever to say of William Robbins' little monograph, The Arnoldian Principle of Flexibility, that it covers ground that everyone who has worked much among the great Victorians will already know about. So much the better, for if circulated widely enough among scholars and students it might just help illuminate some shadowy corners in our reading of Arnold. Any lecturer in Victorian courses knows how much trouble Arnold gives students. He seems at first reading to be

easier than most of the other great Victorian prose masters, Carlyle, Mill, Ruskin. He is more colloquial, his prose rhythms seem somehow more modern, he has congenial touches of irony, and his lexicon of themes includes familiar entries like democracy, equality, anarchy, science, literature, and culture. Why, then, do they so often get him wrong? "Why doesn't he say what he means?" students have a habit of asking. He usually does, of course, but even after the lecturer has carefully explained the meaning of "disinterested"--twice--students often still have a long trip ahead of them before they can settle confidently on what the meaning of that graceful, apparently lucid prose really is.

For one thing, readers newly acquainted with Arnold often think that he cheats. He leads them, and his argument, down a well-lighted pathway, now serious, now ironic, now entertaining; then, suddenly, as he himself puts it, he makes "a return upon himself," and they seem to have lost him while he gets ready for another sally. Or he may start them off with a familiar theme like equality, and then proceed to play a set of variations on it. He moves out to develop a line of thought, then comes back to rest for a moment at the touchstone word before moving off, sometimes in a quite different direction, but always remembering (and reminding the reader at the very end) that "the matter is at present one for the thoughts of those who think," and not a legislative programme. How distressing for students who would much prefer something that they could register in point form as they can their favourite lecturers.

Professor Robbins obviously knows all these things from a long career of studying and teaching Victorian literature. As a result the argument of this monograph consists of a detailed survey of the ways in which Arnold himself demonstrated in his own writing that flexibility which he prized in the critic. Even the non-specialist reader of Arnold is likely to have "sweetness and light" at ready command, as well as "Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace," but for some reason he is not so likely to be aware that the word "flexibility," as Professor Robbins has shown, was another favourite of Arnold's. Somewhere along the line Professor Robbins must have noticed that that word was turning up fairly often, and it may have occurred to him to compile a little concordance for that one word. We are fortunate that he did, for it has enabled him to move flexibly, himself, through Arnold's prose in the attempt to show how, and to what extent, Arnold practised what he preached. To require of the critic that he be flexible, as Arnold does in The Function of Criticism, is easy enough to do; to manage it himself may have been quite another matter. Robbins' exposition demonstrates that Arnold was more successful in this enterprise than he has often been given credit for, either in his day or ours, and particularly that flexibility is not simply a euphemism for dither, vacillation, ambivalence.

In Chapter Two Professor Robbins writes that "the growth of a principle of flexibility was inevitable in a critic who at one time speaks of dominant characteristics in a writer or class or race for reasons of social or psychological realism, and at other times of humanity and its needs on a level of ethical idealism. The shifts in meaning, or in the 'ground itself,' are one aspect of this flexibility." This comes as close as anything else I could quote as a statement of the thesis of this book, but it is particularly apropos for its use of the term "ethical idealism,"

which reminds one at once of Professor Robbins' earlier book, The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold, published in 1959. It is not unfair to either book to describe the recent one as an extensive gloss on the earlier book. That book has worn well, and an expansion of a central part of its argument is welcome.

In Chapter VII of the 1959 book, entitled "A Summary of Arnold's Position," Robbins identifies "the basic principle" of Arnold's position as "imaginative reason," "one of those happy but arbitrary turns of phrase that light up experience and literature for us without being really clear." Early in the new book he writes, "From the call for 'intellectual deliverance' in 'On the Modern Element in Literature,' where the growth of tolerance is seen as one of the signs of Athenian greatness, to the praise of Sophocles in 'Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment' for uniquely balancing the thinking power and the religious sense by the 'imaginative reason,' there is clear indication of the humanistic path Arnold's criticism was to follow, until the day he told the boys at Eton of the supreme need to cultivate the Athenian virtue of eutrapelia, a "'happy and gracious flexibility.'" In both books, then, we find that Robbins is working with his own set of touchstone phrases: "imaginative reason," "ethical idealism," "humanism," "flexibility." And they work well for him because they are so close to the heart of Arnold's own deepest concerns.

Here is how most of these terms are brought together in the penultimate paragraph of the new book, with one or two others for good measure:

It is tempting to call Arnold a pragmatist, for his flexibility is essentially pragmatic as a principle, a matter of growth and adjustment in response to experience, a necessary virtue if his "modern spirit" and his view of truth as many sided were to be viable concepts. Yet the principle, and the dialectical method it fostered, operated in the service of a counterpointing ethical idealism, equally necessary to Arnold's humanistic faith. This in turn could achieve no structural or logical completeness as an exercise of pure reason, much less any dogmatic pronouncement on transcendent truth. It sought its truths instead within historical and psychological experience, inevitably relative and selective, for the principle simply affirmed that life is like that, with man's needs having priority over his theories, and the method was at its best a balancing of opposites in a fruitful tension rather than their resolution in a logical synthesis..

Both books rest upon the assumption, stated in the 1959 volume, that "Arnold is in a humanist tradition of which the most distinguished representative is Erasmus." Quite so, and for his next monograph for the series in which The Principle of Flexibility has appeared I recommend that Professor Robbins take that sentence I have just quoted and flesh it out as he has the theme of flexibility. He would have a ready constituency of readers for it.

C. Earle Sanborn
University of Western Ontario

Reading the Victorian Novel: Detail into Form. Ed. Ian Gregor. London: Vision Press, 1980. Pp. 314, illus.

Literary-critical paths are well-trodden these days; rarely do we encounter a fresh approach that opens up a new way of treating a subject. And this is particularly true, I suspect, in the area of Victorian fiction where so many of the academic studies of recent years seem no more than perfunctory variations on a no longer original theme. But Ian Gregor's clumsily-titled symposium contains all the hallmarks of a genuine critical breakthrough.

Gregor's recent study of Thomas Hardy, The Great Web (1974), showed the direction in which his thoughts were moving. In his preface he remarked: "We have said, it seems to me, too little about the nature of narrative itself, about the sense of a novel as a gradually unfolding process which builds itself up within the reader's experience." And "the reading experience" is a phrase that recurs in the present book. In his introduction here he describes part of his intention as follows: "The book is concerned with the process of reading itself, with the way novels come to us as a page by page experience, gathering themselves suddenly and vividly in one place, slowing down in another, changing rhythm, quickening our expectations here, relying upon recollections there."

But the scope is even broader than this. The larger process is well summed up by David Blair, in an article on Wilkie Collins, when he alludes to the way in which "our reading life intersects with our non-reading life." In general, the contributors concentrate not so much on the texts themselves (though they are invariably faithful to "the words on the page") as on the numerous factors that combine to affect a reader's response. These factors extend beyond the obvious ones, such as the temporal difference between reading a novel week by week or month by month as a serial and reading it as a whole book; there is, for example, the physical effect of experiencing the opulent solidity of a Victorian three-decker (an "appropriate form," we might say) set against the sense of built-in obsolescence inherent in the flimsy paperbacks of our own day. Other elements discussed include the Victorian passion for illustrations to their fiction (an aspect that has recently attracted a good deal of attention elsewhere); the special challenges--and rewards--of the "long" Victorian novel; the relations between a reader's recollection of earlier parts of a novel and the characters' recollections of their own pasts; consideration of different kinds of readers (and the different kinds of editions prepared for them); the experience of re-reading fiction; and, above all, the inevitable difference that must exist between ourselves as twentieth-century readers and the original readers in the Victorian period. One article, Michael Irwin's "Readings of Melodrama" is particularly stimulating here, since it stresses the extent to which the Victorian brought to his reading of fiction a sensibility habituated to the melodramatic conventions of his contemporary theatre--one that no modern reader can hope to reconstruct.

Reading the Victorian Novel is inevitably preoccupied, as its full title indicates, with Form, and the book's own form is of special interest. All the contributors were associated with the University of Kent at Canterbury in the late 1970s, and they met regularly over a period of two

years to discuss the general theme that led to the book and to read and criticize individual papers. The wide interests of the contributors lead naturally to the remarkable comprehensiveness of the whole (though one cannot help noticing that Meredith is conspicuous by his absence). Although Gregor must have been a critical catalyst--he contributes a number of "interchapters" that effectively unify the collection--the book clearly evolved as a collaborative enterprise, every article containing cross-references that either support or qualify the findings of others. The sense of mutual give-and-take--of shared responses, friendly disagreements and resolved difficulties--is highly impressive. All in all, this is for me the most important book on Victorian fiction since the Leavises' Dickens the Novelist.

W. J. Keith
University College
University of Toronto